

## **USDA PILOTS CONSERVATION INNOVATION GRANTS STATE-LEVEL COMPETITIONS IN 12 STATES, GUAM AND THE COMMONWEALTH OF NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS**

WASHINGTON, Feb. 8, 2005—U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service Chief Bruce Knight today announced that 12 states, Guam and the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands will pilot state-level Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) in fiscal year 2005. State-level competitions will be available in California, Colorado, Iowa, Louisiana, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Dakota, Texas, Guam and the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands.

CIG, a component of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, provides farmers and ranchers with the opportunity, through innovation, to address some of the country's most pressing natural resource conservation needs.

"These grants offer an opportunity to promote public-private partnerships and support the President's agenda to provide innovative technologies and approaches to environmental enhancement and protection on working agricultural lands. The state component will provide flexibility for NRCS state conservationists to target CIG funds to individual producers, groups of producers and smaller organizations that submit proposals to address the priority natural resource concerns in the state," Knight said.

The CIG final rule, published in the Federal Register on Jan. 11, 2005, provides for both a national and a state component. The state component is designed to complement the national grant competition announced by USDA on Jan. 11, 2005. Funding availability and detailed application and submission information for the distinct state-level competitions will be announced through public notices, separate from the national program.

In general, the CIG state component will use the same requirements and procedures established for the national competition. In the pilot states, members of the State Technical Committee will evaluate proposals based on the criteria for proposal evaluation identified in the national request for proposals issued Jan. 11, 2005. Final award decisions will be determined by the NRCS state conservationist.

Applicants may apply for both the state and nationwide grants, but must submit separate applications. Proposals will be funded by only one competition.

Selected applicants may receive grants up to 50 percent of the total project cost. Applicants must provide nonfederal matching funds for at least 50 percent of the project cost, of which up to 50 percent may be from in-kind contributions. The federal CIG contribution for any individual grant may not exceed \$75,000 at the state level.

For more information please visit the CIG website at [http://www.pb.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig\\_grants.html](http://www.pb.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig_grants.html)

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